

# Part III

## What Teachers Need to Know About Instruction and Classroom Management

Chapter 8      Group Process in the Classroom

Chapter 9      Positive Approaches to Conduct Management

Chapter 10     Instructional Management

The first two weeks were a time of adjustment. Adjusting lesson plans, classroom seating arrangements and, most challenging, adjusting discipline techniques. I knew I would have to discipline the children. I knew I wasn't supposed to be "too nice" at the beginning....My main focus at the start of the year was creative and innovative lesson planning. I had left much of the discipline technique up to the fact that if the lessons were intriguing, the children would not have a need to misbehave or act out. That was true about 1 percent of the time. There was that rare occasion when all children were interested in the lesson at a single moment, but the normal situation was that there would always be someone within the classroom with a different agenda....(Amy Shea, in Ryan, 1992, pp. 73–74)

Finding the right balance between not enough structure and too much is in one sense what teaching is all about. Time for one more first year

story?...It's a few weeks later after a classroom ambience of antagonistic chaos has been firmly established. There are regular disturbances...and I feel unable to calm the waters. Truth be told, I am feeling battered by a stormy surf and unable to right myself in the undertow.

So, I come up with an idea how to restore control. First, I check the supply cabinet in the main office for 20 file folders. Next, I write up a list of guidelines for classroom behavior and academic work. This list goes onto a typed sheet which I staple inside each folder. With my new system students receive two grades each day: behavior and academic. The behavior grade is either 100 or 0—either the kid follows rules and is rewarded or screws up and gets a 0. At the end of the class, all academic work goes into the folder and is graded.

Day one of the new program: Students behave and do work according to plan. Everybody gets 100. I envision my forthcoming article in *Social Education*: “How to Reinforce Positive Behavior and Increase Academic Success in the Low-Track Class...”

By day five the program has gone to hell.

“Yo, Mr. Nehring, do I still have my hundred for today?”

“Not after that little stunt, Jack. I just wrote your name in the zero column.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, Jack.”

“Good. Now I can like totally mess up for the rest of the period and you can't do nothing about it!” (Nehring, 1989, pp. 48–49)

The overwhelming majority of beginning teachers routinely express concerns about classroom control and frequently experience discipline problems during their initial months and year in the classroom (Rogan, Borich, & Taylor, 1992). Inexperience and lack of attention to the principles of classroom management during teacher training may, in part, contribute to concerns about classroom management. But the sheer difficulty in managing a large group of diverse learners may be another reason.

At the start of each school year, every teacher faces the task of creating a group whose members are willing to do things not of their choosing with people they have not necessarily chosen as friends. The teacher assumes leadership of this group and seeks to gain their acceptance. This is a formidable task for any teacher, let alone a beginning teacher.

In Part III we will prepare you for this challenge by examining some important topics related to the social psychology of classrooms and their management. In Chapter 8 we will examine the classroom from the vantage point of the social psychologist. We will discuss the unique attributes of classroom groups, their effects on learners, and how teachers can promote the development of positive group attributes. This will lead us to how groups are formed and the leadership styles found to be effective for creating a cohesive and productive group of classroom learners.

The process of developing an effective group may take months, sometimes the better part of a semester or school year. At the same time you are steering and guiding this process, you must provide a safe and productive workplace for learners. How successful you are will depend on how well you arrange the physical environment of the classroom, set reasonable rules, teach efficient

routines, and use noncoercive techniques for managing classroom behavior. These important classroom management functions will be the topic of Chapter 9.

In Chapter 10 we will examine the classroom from the perspective of instructional management. Our premise in this chapter is that the first step in good classroom management is good lesson planning. We will outline important attributes of lesson plans, including the knowledge you want learners to acquire, the cognitive or intellectual skills you expect them to demonstrate, and the attitudes and social skills your learners must develop to perform in the real world. Then we will demonstrate how effective teachers prepare lessons that help learners achieve objectives related to knowledge acquisition, thinking, and metacognition.

Together these chapters will provide you with a knowledge of social psychology and practical techniques for applying this knowledge to manage your classroom effectively and efficiently, beginning with your very first day.

# 8

Chapter

## Group Process in the Classroom

This chapter will help you answer the following questions about yourself and your learners:

- What goals can I work toward to make my classroom into a more cohesive group of learners?
- What are some of the ways I can put my learners at ease during the first few days of class?
- How should I respond to learners who choose to challenge my authority early in the school year?
- What types of social power can I acquire at the beginning of the year to help me form and lead a cohesive classroom?
- How can I avoid creating self-fulfilling prophecies in which my expectations about individual learners later influence my behavior toward them?
- How can I develop positive norms of conduct and learning in my classroom?
- What are some practical strategies and activities I can use in my classroom to promote trust and group cohesiveness?
- In what ways can I resolve naturally occurring conflicts arising out of the group dynamics of my classroom?

In this chapter you will also learn the meanings of these terms:

**centering**

**coercive power**

**cooperative learning**

**distancing**

**expectancy (Pygmalion) effect**

**expert power**

**goal conflicts**

**group**

**group cohesiveness**

**group conflict**

**interpersonal conflicts**

**legitimate power**

**limit testing**

**norm crystalization**

**norm diffusion**

**norms**

**procedural conflicts**

**referent power**

**reward power**

**self-concept**

**self-fulfilling prophecy**

**social needs**

**social structure**

**stage of group formation**

Tamara slumped into the one remaining empty chair in the teachers' lounge, exhaling loudly enough for all to hear. She said nothing and just stared blankly. After a few minutes, Christie, a fourth-grade teacher, scooted her chair over to Tamara's. Christie had been at Cedar Creek Elementary for seven years; Tamara for about seven days.

**Christie:** Cheer up! It's almost Friday. Wednesdays are always the hardest. Come tomorrow, there'll be only one day to go.

**Tamara:** So that's how it is?...making it 'til Friday?

**Christie:** What's the problem?

**Tamara:** I can't figure it out. Doing seatwork, copying from the book, answering repetitious questions at the end of the chapter—that's the only way I can keep my class under control. Sharing their experiences, discussing different viewpoints, or working cooperatively...forget that. They only behave when I keep 'em busy, like a drill sergeant. They take advantage of anything else.

**Christie:** That's probably all they've been accustomed to. Anything different and they'd feel insecure.

**Tamara:** But insecure or not, no one seems to want to be in my class. And I can tell some don't like me. Maybe I need to lighten up...smile all day or something and just forget about wanting to create a mature, adultlike atmosphere.

**Christie:** When's the last time you shared your experiences, discussed different viewpoints, or wanted to work with someone you didn't even know?

**Tamara:** I can't remember.

**Christie:** That's my point. That type of atmosphere doesn't just happen—it has to be developed. Your learners first have to feel they belong in your classroom and are accepted by you before they'll think and act without being told what to do.

**Tamara:** But I don't know how to make them feel accepted.

Tamara's dilemma is one many new teachers face. On the one hand, they want a classroom where learners trust and like one another and their teacher. They want their students to learn from one another, feel free to express themselves, respond voluntarily, and respect one another's viewpoints. On the other hand, they value academic excellence, individual achievement, and scholarship. These latter goals give rise to concerns about finishing lesson and unit plans, maintaining order, and staying on schedule. Such concerns can prevent you from investing the time to create the type of classroom climate necessary to achieve both sets of goals.

As Christie noted, a positive classroom climate doesn't just happen—it has to be developed. Such a climate arises when a teacher and learners in a classroom work together as a **group**, not as a collection of individuals. Thus, one of the most important goals for a teacher from the first day of class is group development. As we will learn in this chapter, group development and learner achievement are complementary goals: the achievement of each learner is facilitated by the development of a cohesive group.

How does a teacher go about developing a group? The first step toward this goal is becoming aware that when you enter a classroom, you are stepping into a group that may be unlike any you have experienced. The existing classroom group includes expectations, relationships, roles, interactions, and rules of behavior, all of which are largely unstated.

Our goal in this chapter is to familiarize you with group life and give you the skills you need to manage it. We will begin by examining group dynamics and group processes. Then we will study the characteristics of a group, how being in a group affects the behavior of its members, and the processes by which groups form. Finally, we will study the qualities of effective groups and what you can do to develop them in your own classroom.



## Group Processes

In Chapters 2 and 3 you learned about various theories of developmental influences on behavior, such as heredity, temperament, and child-rearing practices. Social psychologists also examine the way our perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and actions are influenced by other people. They study how groups form and function, their unique structure and roles, and how they influence the behavior of their members. For most of the twentieth century, social psychologists have examined group processes in industry, the military, government agencies, and the field of mental health. More recently, many of these same social psychological principles have been used to study life in classrooms.

Richard and Patricia Schmuck are two researchers concerned with applying principles of group process and group dynamics to help teachers understand group life in the classroom. For the past quarter century they have researched and written about the effect of group processes on learners' emotional adjustment and academic achievement. They, along with others (Glasser, 1990; Johnson & Johnson, 1984; Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992; Slavin, 1991) believe that high levels of individual scholarship, learning, and academic achievement go hand in hand with high levels of group support and cooperation. Let's examine the classroom from this social psychological perspective.

### What Is a Group?

Classes, simply by being gatherings of people, cannot necessarily be characterized as cohesive groups. For example, an adult computer literacy class whose members sit at individual work stations for the entire period can be expected to develop less cohesiveness than a class of third-graders who spend the entire school day together for a year. Three properties contribute to making a classroom of learners a cohesive group: (1) relationships (the interaction and interdependence of members), (2) common goals, and (3) a social structure. Figure 8.1 shows these properties. Let's look at each.

## Relationships

One of the principal requirements of a group is that the members form relationships. In order to form relationships, the members of the group must interact with one another and, to a certain degree, depend on one another. The teacher who discourages interaction between members of the class, who requires that learners sit at individual desks arranged in rows for an entire grading period, and who assigns only individual seat-work will promote little interaction and interdependence and, consequently, few relationships.

This point was made by Calonico and Calonico (1972) in a study of third-grade classrooms. Their data showed that the more learners worked together, shared, and talked during academic tasks, the stronger were their feelings of friendship toward one another. Coming from the same neighborhood, being in a classroom together, and playing together during recess or lunch are no guarantees that learners will form friendships. Teachers who want learners to form a cohesive group should encourage interaction, interdependence, and cooperation during academic work.

## Common Goals

In addition to relationships, a second attribute that contributes to a cohesive group is common goals. Individuals who come together to achieve a common purpose are more likely to form a cohesive group than individuals who do not. This attribute is less apparent in classrooms in which teachers and learners think in terms of individual rather than group achievement. Consequently, teachers who promote **group cohesiveness** should consider developing goals for the entire class to work toward. Schmuck and Schmuck (1992) propose four types of group goals: task-group, task-individual, social-emotional-group, and social-emotional-individual. Examples of these four types of goals are presented in Figure 8.2.

In this scheme, task goals are concerned with academic learning, while social-emotional goals are directed toward helping learners develop positive self-images and meet their needs for control over their environment, recognition by peers, and acceptance. The work of social psychologists suggests that teachers give consideration to both task and social-emotional goals. Research in industry shows that higher economic gains (task goals) have resulted when industrial work groups were allowed to give consideration to social-emotional processes (Kuriloff & Atkins, 1966). Schmuck (1971) also presents evidence from elementary schools that higher individual achievement results when group goals are addressed. He proposes that the highest degree of group cohesiveness will be attained in classrooms that work toward all four types of goals identified in Figure 8.2. In this manner, learners can satisfy individual needs for competence and security in the context of the support and encouragement groups provide.

### Social Structure

The final attribute that contributes to group cohesiveness is called **social structure**. Social structure refers to the roles and functions assumed by members of the group. There is a social structure in every classroom: a leader and followers, a teacher and students, a responsible adult and youthful members. Certain functions or responsibilities accompany each role, regardless of which individuals assume these roles.

In addition, the social structure dictates how those who assume various roles will relate to one another. These relationships can be formal: “Raise your hand and wait to be recognized before speaking”; “No one may approach my desk without permission.” Or they can be informal when, for example, individual personalities and the goals of the classroom are taken into consideration. For example, although most teachers may discourage learners from calling out, a teacher may allow a less formal pattern of teacher-student talk during group discussion to encourage student spontaneity.

When considering social structure and its relationship to groups, social psychologists emphasize two points: First, a clear social structure is needed for a cohesive group to form. Classrooms in which the teacher fails to assume leadership or individual students assert control are less cohesive. Second, the individual personalities of learners and teachers should be considered when establishing how those who assume different roles relate to one another. Classrooms characterized by excessively rigid rules and relationships may find it difficult to develop high degrees of cohesiveness.

### Summary

Social psychologists point out that a group has three principal attributes: relationships, common goals, and a social structure. Depending on the extent to which the teacher allows learners to interact, work toward common goals, and establish certain roles and functions, a classroom can become cohesive or fragmented.

What advantages are there for learners and teachers in a classroom with a high degree of cohesiveness? Before examining the stages of group development and what teachers can do to promote this development, let's look at what social psychologists have discovered about the effects groups have on their members.

### Effects of Groups on Their Members

#### Group Effects on Learner Achievement

Would having your learners work on the same math problems in a group result in more correct answers than having them solve the same problems by themselves? In other words, does the presence of others facilitate or impede performance? This question has been asked by social psychologists (Zimbardo, 1996), and until recently they were relatively certain of the answer.

Allport (1924) and Dashiell (1935) concluded that as tasks became more cognitively complex—requiring intellectual activity, such as solving math problems—the presence

of others decreased individual performance. But for tasks that required routine physical or motor skills—such as running or diving—the presence of others facilitated performance. Social psychologists explained these different findings by reference to the role played by anxiety. They reasoned that the presence of others had the effect of increasing anxiety and impairing performance when the individual was engaged in an intellectual skill that was not well learned (solving a new math problem, for example). However, when the person was doing something familiar (riding a bike, running, or diving, for example), the presence of others increased arousal or drive and improved performance.

However, research by Sharan and Sharan (1976) indicated that the presence of others during the learning of complex intellectual tasks actually produced faster learning with greater retention than the same material presented in a lecture format. In their research, learners worked cooperatively and interdependently. Schmuck and Schmuck (1992) explain these results by pointing out that the quality of the interpersonal relationships of the members of the group is the critical factor. When learners work around others they know and trust, learning is facilitated. The opposite occurs in a group of learners who neither know nor trust one another.

Subsequent research by Cohen (1984, 1986), Cohen and Intele (1981), Webb (1982), and Slavin (1984, 1990b) indicates that cooperative learning in groups produces higher levels of academic achievement involving conceptual learning and problem solving across a variety of curriculum areas than do individualistic learning formats. Webb (1982) and Cohen (1986) attribute the superiority of cooperative learning to the benefit of having to explain to others complex concepts in one's own words. The implication of this research is that when learners work interdependently and cooperatively with other learners whom they know and trust, complex cognitive learning is enhanced.

## Group Effects on Motivation

Psychologists such as Maslow (1943), Dreikurs, Grunwald, and Pepper (1982), and Glasser (1986) point out that human beings have certain shared psychological needs. As we learned in Chapter 7, much of human motivation can be understood as attempts to fulfill basic human needs.

Social psychologists have added to our understanding of this human drive for fulfillment by explaining how the social context (the presence of others) contributes to motivation (Allport, 1955; Fyano, 1980; McClelland, 1975). All individuals want to experience recognition, have a sense of control over their environment, and feel knowledgeable to some degree. Being a member of a group, however, intensifies and alters these **social needs** so that they are expressed as a desire to be accepted as a member of a group (affiliation), a desire to have an influence over others (power), and a need to be competent (achievement). Social psychologists like Patricia and Richard Schmuck urge teachers to recognize that groups give rise to strong needs for affiliation, power, and achievement and to then use this heightened motivation to achieve academic excellence. They caution that classrooms in which these three basic needs are not satisfied may have large numbers of learners who feel rejected, listless, powerless, and incompetent. Motivational and conduct problems are thus created within the classroom.

## Group Effects on the Self-concept

Social psychologists like Mead (1934) and Cooley (1956) argue that an individual's **self-concept** develops through his or her associations with other people. In other words, how one eventually comes to feel about oneself results from one's interactions with parents, siblings, peers, and teachers.

When children come to school they have the opportunity to interact with others and to learn how others perceive them; naturally they are curious about how they are

perceived by teachers and peers. Social psychologists believe that children internalize views of themselves from the way others perceive them.

One study investigating this theory of self-concept was carried out by Mannheim (1957), who collected questionnaires from college students asking them what most influenced the image they held of themselves. She found that the dominant influence on her respondents' self-image came from their most immediate reference group—those with whom they lived. Her results showed that as the respondents' reference groups changed, so did the positive or negative self-image conveyed to them.

Schmuck and Schmuck (1992) emphasize the child's vulnerability to developing a low self-concept in the classroom. Their research and that of Argyus (1972) shows that low-status learners with poor grades and few friends can lose self-esteem when they have few opportunities to experience psychological success with either adults or peers. This in turn lowers their academic achievement and general psychological well-being. They also point out that some school practices related to ability grouping, labeling, and exclusion based on learning problems (to be discussed in Chapter 14) run the risk of creating low-status learners who develop negative feelings about themselves and others.

### Group Effects on Emotions

Social psychologists point out that many face-to-face interactions in a group involve emotional conflicts. These emotionally charged interactions may be inevitable among group members who have needs for affiliation, power, and achievement (Coleman & Bexton, 1975).

One factor that contributes to the emotionality of a group is the experiences of the family life of its members. Individuals often generalize the feelings and patterns of interaction learned at home to groups outside the family. Willingness to cooperate, comply, and share, as well as expectations from adults or peers that learners acquire at home can influence behavior in the classroom (Dreikurs et al., 1982).

The classroom presents numerous opportunities for emotionally laden interactions of its own. It has many similarities with home life: at least one authority figure, peers with whom one must associate, and rules not of one's own making. Disagreements and conflicts can easily arise as learners seek to learn how others feel about them and try to meet their own goals. As we will see shortly, a teacher's leadership style can exacerbate or ameliorate these emotional conflicts.

## Summary

Social psychologists have studied the intellectual opportunities and emotional problems created when learners come together as a group. Intellectual achievement can be enhanced or stifled depending on how comfortable a student feels around others. Drives to be accepted, influence others, and achieve in their presence can also rise to the surface. When properly channeled, these drives can produce increased levels of achievement and learner satisfaction. If frustrated, they can lead to despair, listlessness, and conflict. In the next section we examine how these drives can be channeled to form a cohesive and productive group environment.

## Group Formation: A Developmental Perspective

One of the challenges confronting the classroom teacher is creating a cohesive group of learners who, at the start of the school year, may not know or choose to be with one another, are required to be in a room with a teacher who may not be of their choosing, and who may have little to say about the rules by which their behavior will be governed. Social psychologists who study group development believe that there are distinct **stages of group formation** (Mauer, 1985; Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992; Stanford, 1977; Tuckman, 1988). Teachers who want their classroom learners to work as a group—to



like one another, learn from one another, and support one another's learning—must consider how a group forms and works together.

### Stages of Group Development

Social psychologists such as Schutz (1958), Johnson and Johnson (1984), and Schmuck and Schmuck (1992) believe that every successful group passes through a series of stages during which it has certain tasks to accomplish or certain concerns that must be resolved. The way the group accomplishes these tasks and resolves these concerns to a large extent determines how cohesive a group it will be. Mauer (1985) describes these stages as follows:

*Stage I: Forming.* Resolving concerns about acceptance and responsibilities.

*Stage II: Storming.* Resolving concerns about shared influence.

*Stage III: Norming.* Resolving concerns about how work gets done.

*Stage IV: Performing.* Resolving concerns about freedom, control, and self-regulation.

Figure 8.3 illustrates these four stages. In the following sections, we describe each stage in detail and suggest specific ways that teachers can promote group development in each.

**Stage I: Forming.** When learners come together at the start of the school year, they usually are concerned about two issues: (1) finding their place in the social structure and (2) finding out what they are expected to do. This first issue involves concerns about “inclusion” or “group membership” (Schutz, 1958). During the first several days of class, learners (and some teachers) naturally ask, “How will I fit in?” “Who will accept or reject me?” “What do I have to do to be respected?” At this time, a phenomenon called *testing* takes place (Froyen, 1993). Learners engage in specific actions to see what kind of reaction they get from teachers and peers. This is the learner's way of finding

out how the teacher and peers feel toward him. At this stage of group formation, learners are curious about one another. They want to know where other class members live, who their friends are, what they like to do after school, and where they like to go. As students learn more about one another, they begin to see how and with whom they fit in.

Putnam and Burke (1992) urge teachers to engage in activities during the first few weeks of school to help learners trust one another and feel like members of a group. The accompanying box, *Fostering Group Development*, describes such activities.

There is a tendency among teachers during the first stage of classroom group development to concentrate almost exclusively on concerns about work and rules to the exclusion of social concerns. However, learners who have unresolved fears about acceptance by the teacher and where they fit in the peer group will find it difficult to concentrate on academic work without first developing trust and the feeling that they are valued members of a group (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992; Schutz, 1958).

Questions teachers can ask to promote group development during the forming stage and each subsequent stage of group development are listed in Table 8.1.

Stage II: Storming. The goal of the forming stage of group development is to help learners feel secure and perceive themselves as members of a classroom group. Healthy group life at this stage occurs if learners have accepted the teacher as their leader, made some initial commitment to follow rules and procedures, and agreed to respect other members of the class. During the storming stage of group development they begin to test the limits of these commitments (Froyen, 1993). This limit-testing may take the form of amiable challenges to academic expectations (homework, classwork, tests, and the like) and rules in order to establish the conditions under which they do and do not apply. Learners may question seating arrangements, homework responsibilities, and seatwork

routines. They may want further explanations for rules that they initially agreed to follow.

Social psychologists refer to these amiable challenges to teacher authority and leadership as examples of **distancing** behavior. Distancing behavior occurs in any group where a leader initially establishes authority by virtue of his or her position rather than through competence or credibility. Thus distancing behavior represents the learners' reservations about the commitments they made during the forming stage to class expectations and group participation.

A second type of amiable limit-testing that often accompanies distancing behavior is called **centering** behavior. Centering occurs when learners start to question how they will personally benefit from being group members—in other words, they ask, “What’s in it for me?” At this stage, the questions learners ask and the assertions they make reflect a preoccupation with fairness. They are quick to notice favoritism toward some members of the group.

These distancing and centering conflicts that arise between teachers and learners and between the learners themselves are a natural part of group development. Social psychologists caution teachers about feeling threatened or overreacting at this stage. The storming stage is best perceived as a desirable reflection on past commitments made by learners that must occur on the journey to developing a healthy group life. During these types of conflicts, teachers need to monitor compliance with rules and procedures, but be willing to reconsider those that may not be working. Questions that teachers can ask themselves to promote group development during the storming stage are listed in Table 8.1.

Stage III: Norming. The security learners develop at the forming stage provides them with a safe foundation to challenge the teacher’s authority during the storming stage. Skilled leadership during the storming stage assures learners that they will be listened to,

treated fairly, and allowed to share power and influence. This assurance leads them during the norming stage to accept academic expectations, procedures, and rules for group functioning as well as the roles and functions of the various group members.

**Norms** are shared expectations by group members regarding how they should think, feel, and behave. Social psychologists view norms as the principal regulators of group behavior (Zimbardo, 1996). They may take the form of either written or unwritten rules that all or most members of the group voluntarily agree to follow. A classroom group has norms when learners, for the most part, agree on what is and is not socially acceptable classroom behavior.

Healthy group development at the norming stage is characterized by group behavior that is primarily focused on academic achievement. Assuming that group development has proceeded successfully up to this point, group members now are principally concerned with their own learning and that of the group. Learners feel secure and trust one another, accept their role as followers and the teacher's role as group leader, and are ready to get down to the business of the classroom. The norms that develop at this stage assure the group members that they know how to pursue and achieve their academic goals. Many teachers see the norming stage as the most satisfying and productive phase of group development.

Stage IV: Performing. By the time the group has reached the fourth developmental stage, performing, learners feel at ease with one another, know the rules and their roles, accept group norms, and are familiar with the routines of the classroom. The principal concern for the group at this stage is establishing its independence.

Just as the storming stage of development was characterized by a testing of limits, the performing stage is characterized by learners' desire to show that they can perform independently of the teacher. Social psychologists urge teachers to encourage this desire for independence by focusing less on classroom control at this stage and more on

teaching the group how to set priorities, budget time, self-evaluate, self-regulate, and self-discipline. Putnam and Burke (1992) recommend that during this stage, as compared to the others, teachers devote more time modeling to students how to reflect on what they have learned and how to evaluate their own performances.

The performing stage ends with the school year or semester. Thus, this stage represents a time of transition. Assuming all four stages of development have been successfully completed, learners will have developed relationships with one another and with their teacher. Social psychologists suggest that teachers structure year-end activities to prepare group members to make the transition to other classes and grade levels (Putnam & Burke, 1992).

## Summary

Forming, storming, norming, and performing are stages by which a group develops and becomes effective in establishing relationships, common goals, and an identifiable structure. These four steps are essential in building a healthy classroom group life. In other words, at each stage certain concerns become paramount for the group, and these concerns must be resolved before the group can proceed to a more advanced level of development.

In the next section, we will discuss the criteria by which social psychologists gauge the health of a classroom group at any of the four developmental stages. We will point out the fundamental properties of a healthy developing classroom group, as indicated by social psychological research, and provide some suggestions and activities to ensure that your group possesses these ingredients. Those that are fundamental to a productive classroom climate are leadership, expectations, norms, cohesiveness, and problem solving (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992).

## Leadership

What kind of group leader do you want to be? How do you want your students to perceive you at the forming stage of group development? How will you establish your leadership so as to help learners feel comfortable with you and with each other? How will you make converts of some learners and compatriots of others? According to social psychologists (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1974), to accomplish this you will have to gain your students' trust and respect the "old-fashioned way...you will have to earn it." But exactly how is this done? French and Raven look at how you earn respect by asking the question "How do you achieve social power?" They identify five types of social power, or leadership, that a teacher or authority figure can strive for: expert, referent, legitimate, reward, and coercive power (see Figure 8.4).

### Expert Power

Certain individuals become leaders because others perceive them as experts (Borich, 1993, 1996). Successful teachers have **expert power**. Their students see them as both competent to explain and do certain things and knowledgeable about particular topics. Such influence is earned, rather than conferred by virtue of having a particular title. Teachers with expert power explain things well, show enthusiasm and excitement about what they teach, and appear confident and self-assured before their classes.

As a new teacher, you may find it difficult to establish leadership through expert power. Even though you are knowledgeable and competent, uncertainty and inexperience in front of a group may make you appear less so. Students are attuned to body language that suggests indecision and lack of confidence, and they may test the competence and challenge the authority of a teacher who appears not to be in command of the subject.

## Referent Power

Students often accept as leaders teachers whom they like and respect. They view such teachers as trustworthy, fair, and concerned. The term **referent power** is used to describe leadership earned in this way. Ask any group of junior high or high school students why they like particular teachers, and they will invariably describe the teachers they like as “fair,” “caring,” and “someone you can talk to.” Without referent power, even teachers with expert power may have their authority challenged or ignored.

Teachers sometimes say that they would rather be respected than liked, as if these two consequences were mutually exclusive. Research by Soar and Soar (1983), however, suggests that teachers can be both respected and liked. According to these researchers, teachers who were both respected and liked were associated with greater student satisfaction and higher achievement. Glasser (1986) also emphasizes that students’ need for belonging in a classroom is more likely to be met by a teacher who is perceived as both warm and competent.

## Legitimate Power

Some roles by their very nature carry with them influence and authority. Police officers, presidents, and judges exert social power and leadership by their very titles. This type of power has been referred to as **legitimate power**; unlike expert and referent power, it cannot be earned. Teachers possess a certain degree of legitimate power. Our society expects students to give teachers their attention, to respect them, and to do what they say. Most families also stress the importance of “listening to the teacher.” Every new teacher begins his or her first day of class with legitimate power.

Legitimate power, therefore, gives the new teacher some breathing room during the first few weeks of school. Most students will initially obey and accept the authority of a new teacher by virtue of his or her position of authority. However, building classroom leadership solely through legitimate power—that bestowed by others—may be like

building a house on a foundation of sand. The first challenge to authority may quickly erode any initial influence that legitimate power may have provided. Teachers should therefore use their legitimate power to establish referent and expert power.

### Reward Power

Individuals in positions of authority can reward the people they lead. These rewards can take the form of privileges, approval, or more tangible compensation, such as money. To the extent that students desire the rewards conferred by teachers, teachers can exert a degree of leadership and authority. However, students who don't care much about good grades or teacher approval are difficult to lead solely by exerting **reward power**, since much of what is reinforcing to students can be attained outside of school without the aid of a teacher. In such cases some teachers resort to tangible reinforcers, like access to desired activities, objects, and even food. In the next chapter we will examine some of the research on the use of tangible reinforcers. In this chapter, you will learn that reward power can be an effective tool in the classroom but cannot substitute for referent or expert power.

### Coercive Power

By law, teachers and other school personnel are allowed to act *in loco parentis*, or with the same authority the parent has. Consequently, within limits, schools can punish students who defy the authority or leadership of the teacher by such techniques as suspension or expulsion, denial of privileges, or removal from the classroom. Teachers who rely on such techniques to maintain social power in the classroom are said to be using **coercive power**. The use of coercive power, however, may end misbehavior for a time, but at the cost of failing to develop trusting relationships or meeting students' needs for belonging. Overreliance on coercive power may lead to the formation of subgroups antagonistic to class cohesiveness, group cooperation, and achievement.



Teachers, especially new teachers, should work to establish expert and referent power as the best way to guide group development. Expert power can be achieved by completing in-service training and graduate programs, keeping up-to-date with the literature in your field of expertise, attending seminars and workshops, and meeting state and district career ladder and mentoring requirements. It is not likely that you will have this type of influence during your first weeks of teaching. However, from the very first day of class you can exhibit referent power by giving students a sense of belonging and acceptance.

### Expectations

Social psychologists emphasize that the most important content to be communicated during teacher-student interactions, whether they are formal or informal, is high expectations. Students want to receive the message that they are competent, responsible, attractive, interesting, and capable of learning what you are teaching. The expectations you hold for your learners can create the behavior you want for them. Consider the expectations a teacher is expressing to the class in each of the following statements:

“Tests in this class will be hard, and some probably won’t make it.”

“I can’t understand why you’re having trouble with this.”

“I can see that you haven’t understood a thing.”

“I won’t go over it again if you don’t get it this time.”

Social psychologists use the expression **self-fulfilling prophecy** to describe how expectancies tend to confirm themselves (Cooper, 1979). Large group settings, such as the typical school classroom, tend to encourage the **expectancy (Pygmalion) effect**. When teachers work individually with students or in small groups, teachers receive immediate feedback that either confirms or disconfirms their expectations. However, when teachers work almost exclusively with large groups, they often lack immediate

knowledge of the changes that may be occurring in their learners' behavior that can disconfirm negative expectations and biases. Consequently, their beliefs or expectancies remain unchallenged.

Good and Brophy (1991) describe how expectations lead to self-fulfillment in the following way:

- Based on what you read, hear, or see about your students, you naturally expect different achievements and social behaviors from different students.
- These expectations affect your decisions while you are teaching—you call on certain students and not others; you wait longer for some students to give answers than others; you seat students in different parts of the room; you check the work of some students more frequently; you assign easier or more difficult assignments.
- Your students eventually learn what they are and are not expected to do, and they behave accordingly.
- You therefore observe the student behavior that confirms your original expectations, and the cycle repeats itself.

Figure 8.5 describes this cycle. It can be broken only when the teacher receives consistent feedback from students that disconfirms his or her predictions. Such feedback is less likely to occur in large-group instructional formats.

A particularly alarming example of the expectancy effect was uncovered by Rist (1970) when he studied a class of ghetto students from kindergarten through second grade. Rist observed that from the time these students entered kindergarten, they were divided into three groups—"tigers," "cardinals," and "clowns"—each seated at a different table. The kindergarten teacher initially placed the children in these groups based on their socioeconomic status and information from registration forms and from interviews with mothers and social workers. The highest-status children, the tigers, were

seated closest to the teacher and quickly labeled “fast learners.” The lowest status children, the clowns, were farthest removed from the teacher and were quickly led to believe that they were “slow learners.”

In reality, each of the three groups had a mixture of slow and fast learners, but the slow learners who were seated farthest from the teacher seldom got the opportunity to interact with her, while those closest to the teacher frequently received her attention. Before long the abilities of each group were taken as fact rather than as creations of the teacher, so much so that it was increasingly difficult for the “clowns” to be considered anything other than slow by their teachers in subsequent grades.

At no time did the teacher seem to be aware that the arrangement was biased or that seating certain students consistently in the back of the room would reduce their contact with her. Thus, this teacher’s bias became a self-fulfilling prophecy that extended even to subsequent grades and classes. Other types of self-fulfilling biases may also affect your interactions with students. For example, Gage and Berliner (1988) identified several biased ways in which teachers interact with their students. They then analyzed the extent to which experienced teachers actually exhibited these negative expectations in their classrooms. Their biases included interacting with students disproportionately in these ways:

- Calling on students seated in the front half of the classroom more often than those seated in the back half of the classroom

- Calling on nicer-looking students more often than average-looking students

- Calling on more able students more often than less able students

- Calling on nonminority group members more often than minority group members

Gage and Berliner calculated the number of student-teacher interactions that would be expected by chance for these classifications, and then from classroom observation they determined the actual number of interactions that occurred. Somewhat surprisingly, their

results indicated that every teacher showed some bias in these categories. In other words, every teacher favored at least one student classification over another by naming, calling on, requiring information from, or otherwise interacting with those in some classification disproportionately to those not in that classification.

Such biases may be meaningless over a single class period but can have a significant and long-lasting emotional impact on students if continued throughout weeks, months, or the entire school year. The accumulated effect of systematic bias in a classroom can be an open message to some students that they are less desirable and less worthy of attention than others, regardless of how unintentional the bias may be. If the message is received, the result may be a change in motivation, self-concept, and even anxiety levels of some students in ways that impede any attempt to develop trusting relationships.

Studies by Schmuck and Schmuck (1992) report that sometimes biases can become so strong that even when students change their behavior significantly, the changes may not be perceived by the teacher or, when perceived, they may be misinterpreted. Thus, you may perceive your students' actual improvements in social behavior as manipulative, temporary, or motivated only to get some tangible reward. You may attribute improvements in their academic behavior to luck, cheating, or help from parents or other students rather than evidence of their growth in learning.

Inevitably, you will have different expectations for your students. Your access to academic records, report cards, and the anecdotes of previous teachers, as well as the wide range of academic and social skill levels you are likely to have in your classroom, will naturally encourage a tendency to expect less of some and more of others. You will not help but notice who grasps new concepts most quickly, and which students are the most persistent and responsible in completing classwork and homework. You cannot avoid expectations, but you can avoid their effects on learners by monitoring how you lead the class and communicate during large-group, small-group, and one-on-one interactions. Expectancy effects on the achievement and social behavior of learners can

be monitored by using the checklist in the accompanying box, *Avoiding Expectancy Effects* (Cooper & Good, 1983).

## Norms

Despite their immunity to the threat of a failing grade, some of my students maintained a social agenda of some kind and class participation for them represented an opportunity to cultivate relationships with the opposite sex. These students could thus be affected by shifting their seating arrangements. I did so with the intention of separating the talkative, “don’t-threaten-me-with-a-failing-grade” type student from others who shared their desire to communicate and disrupt. Though I did achieve some success with the musical chairs strategy, there were definite problems with it....

These noise-related problems and challenges were the most obvious and annoying of the issues that confronted me during my first few months at Meadowfield. Despite the negative effect these problems had on the class, as well as my own morale, I nevertheless managed temporarily to avoid taking a harsh stand on matters of classroom discipline. I had had several heart-to-heart discussions with my classes designed to focus attention on the problem of noise and with the hope of making it unnecessary to adopt harsh disciplinary measures.

For about a week or so after the talk, the quality of life in Room C313 improved noticeably. The situation was eventually shattered, however, by a core group of students, small but influential, for whom the desire to talk—and attract attention—was more important than the needs of everyone else. It was this group that eventually managed to restore the near chaos that at times had reigned prior to our heart-to-heart discussions. (Michael, in Ryan, 1992, pp. 152–153)

A social psychologist analyzing Michael's classroom would conclude that this class is moving toward norms that are antagonistic rather than supportive of academic achievement. In addition to leadership and expectations, social psychologists point to norms as an important barometer of healthy group development. Let's examine what they are and what you can do to influence them.

### What Are Norms?

Norms describe what group members should or should not do to be socially acceptable. They tell group members what is expected of them and what they in turn should expect of others. They usually are not formally stated or written down. For example, nowhere is it written that in your college classes you should listen (and sometimes take notes) when your professor is speaking, or that you should wait to be dismissed by your teacher rather than leave before the end of class. Likewise, you know better than to read a newspaper while the professor is lecturing. You learned these behavioral expectations by observing what most other students do.

Norms play a similar role in governing behavior in elementary and secondary classrooms. But they do so differently than do rules and procedures, which are not as personally meaningful. Some positive norms are given here:

- It's OK to be seen talking to the teacher after school.
- Learners in this class should help one another with their classwork.
- We're all responsible for our own learning.
- We shouldn't gloat when one of our classmates gives a wrong answer.
- We need to respect the privacy of others.
- The most important thing for this class is learning.

Norms such as these can support academic achievement and positive relationships. Other norms can serve the opposite purpose, as we saw in Michael's class. Whether positive or

negative, norms may be brought with learners on the first day of class, or they may develop as the school year proceeds. Before discussing how norms develop and what you can do to influence their development, let's see what functions norms can serve in your classroom.

### Significance of Classroom Norms

Social psychologists believe that positive norms serve several functions in the classroom (Froyen, 1993; Putnam & Burke, 1992; Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992).

- Norms orient group members to which social interactions are appropriate and which are not, and then regulate those social interactions. Norms allow learners to anticipate the ways others will behave in the classroom and tell them how they are expected to behave themselves.
- Norms create group identification and group cohesiveness (Zimbardo, 1996). Group formation begins when the members agree to adhere to the norms of the group. This process begins during the forming stage of group development and ends during the norming stage.
- Norms promote academic achievement and positive relationships among class members. Academic and social goals are more likely to be achieved in classrooms with consistent norms. For example, peer group norms, when they are congruent with the teacher's norms for the class, represent one of the most important influences on school performance (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992).

### How Norms Develop

Group norms, whether in support of a teacher's goals or opposed to them, begin to develop on the first day of school, during the forming stage of group development. Zimbardo (1996) identifies two basic processes by which norms develop: diffusion and crystallization.

**Norm diffusion** takes place when learners first enter a group or class. They bring with them expectations acquired from experiences in other classes, other group memberships, and other life experiences. As the learners talk and mingle with each other during breaks and recess they communicate with one another. Their various expectations for academic and social behavior are diffused and spread throughout the entire class.

Eventually, as learners engage in a variety of activities together, their expectations begin to converge and crystallize into a shared perspective regarding classroom life. This process of **norm crystallization** was shown in a classic experiment in social psychology. Sherif (1935) was interested in how the presence of other people affects perceptions. The experimental situation involved the use of a phenomenon called the *autokinetic effect*. This effect is an illusion of motion that occurs when you stare at a stationary point of light for an extended period of time. After you have stared at the light for several minutes, it appears to begin to move. Sherif asked his subjects to judge the direction and distance of the perceived movement and recorded their judgments.

Next he asked the subjects to perform the same task, this time with several other observers present. The observers, unknown to the experimental subjects, were confederates of Sherif. All the observers reported their judgments out loud. The confederates consistently reported the movement of the light in a single direction. Sherif found that his subjects then changed their judgments to conform to those of the group. Even more surprisingly, when they were alone again they continued to report that the stationary light moved in the direction identified by the other observers.

Sherif concluded that the uncertainty of the situation, combined with public sharing of opinions or judgments, encouraged the crystallization of a norm—in this case the direction of the movement of light. Once established, the norm continued to influence the perceptions of the group.

Patricia and Richard Schmuck believe that learners encounter a similar situation in the classroom. During the first few weeks of school, the classroom confronts learners



with a variety of sensory experiences and many ambiguous events. Learners wonder “What will our teacher be like?” “Will she give hard work?” “Will she be fair?” “Are the other students my friends?” “Will this class be interesting?”

Learners bring to this situation certain attitudes and beliefs about teachers and classrooms. As they talk with one another, their attitudes diffuse and become shared and crystallized into classroom norms. For example, the teacher on the first day of class may unintentionally speak harshly to a learner. Learners may be confused about how to interpret this action. Those with prior negative experiences may express their feelings about the teacher. “He’s someone you can’t like.” “Don’t try to be friends.” “Let’s not cooperate.” Eventually, these feelings and perceptions may solidify into class norms, which become resistant to change. Mike’s class, which we visited earlier, was experiencing the process of norm diffusion and crystallization.

### How Teachers Can Influence Classroom Norms

Social psychologists tell us that norms play an important role in determining whether learners achieve academic and social goals. As we saw earlier, positive norms can support academic achievement; negative norms can work against it. Thus, teachers should do all they can to influence the development of norms that support their classroom goals. Therefore, it is important that you know how to positively influence the development of class norms and how to identify and alter existing ones. The accompanying box, *Influencing Group Norms*, provides detailed suggestions, and Table 8.2 provides a list of comments from learners indicating how easily teachers can fail to model appropriate norms by communicating the message “Do as I say, not as I do.”

### Cohesiveness

Many teachers and administrators maintain that their job is to develop academic skills, not group cohesiveness. Social psychologists, on the other hand, believe that such a view

may be shortsighted because of the relationship between academic achievement and group cohesiveness in the classroom (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992). They assert that teachers need to be concerned that learners like not only learning but one another. They support this assertion by pointing out that learners have significant needs for affiliation by virtue of being in a classroom group.

Thus, social psychologists highlight group cohesiveness as the fourth characteristic of a healthy group that teachers should promote. They stress that group cohesiveness satisfies not only needs for affiliation but also needs for achievement. As we will see, research has established an important link between group cohesiveness, academic achievement, and group productivity.

#### How Cohesiveness Affects Academic Performance and Group Problem Solving

*Cohesiveness* refers to how individual students feel about their classroom group as a whole. Group cohesiveness is strong when each student sees himself or herself as an important part of the group. Group cohesiveness is weak when individuals in the group feel more attraction to a subgroup or to other individuals than to the entire group.

Cohesiveness exerts significant impact on your students' willingness to learn. Research on cohesiveness demonstrates that learners who perceive themselves as liked and accepted within the classroom peer structure learn more than those who do not.

A study by Lewis and St. John (1974) supports this view. These researchers studied the achievement of African-American students in classrooms where the majority of students were white. They concluded that for the African-American students to raise their grades there had to be (1) classroom norms supportive of academic achievement and (2) acceptance of African-American students by white students into the peer group. Merely being around white students who had high expectations and being part of a group

with norms stressing achievement were not sufficient for the African-American students to excel. The white students had to accept them as friends as well.

Research into the effectiveness of **cooperative learning** groups suggests that such groups produce higher levels of academic achievement, particularly in terms of conceptual learning, problem solving, and metacognitive learning, than do individual, competitive learning formats (Cohen, 1985; Slavin, 1990b, 1991). The cohesiveness of these groups is a principal ingredient of their success (Cohen, 1985; Slavin, 1987, 1990b, 1991). This research indicates that teachers should prepare learners for cooperative learning through training exercises and activities that promote the development of interaction skills and trusting relationships.

Cohesiveness promotes not only individual achievement but also group productivity. Kafer (1976), working in elementary school classrooms, measured the cohesiveness of various small working groups. He found that the most productive groups were those that scored highest in terms of friendship patterns among group members and mutual attraction and trust. Also, Reynolds (1977) reported significant improvement in attendance in a junior high school following the establishment of a “buddy system.” Learners with attendance problems identified buddies who lived near them and would remind them to go to school and be on time. After six weeks, not only did student attendance improve, but many of the buddies became close friends as well.

### Promoting Group Cohesiveness

Group cohesiveness is most directly influenced by the friendship structure of the class. In particular, social psychologists emphasize that this structure must be diverse. In other words, learners must be friendly with as many different class members as possible. Cliques or many small independent subgroups of friends can detract from group cohesiveness.

Friendships grow out of trust. Trust develops when individuals know something about one another and have the opportunity to work and be together. Mistrust can develop in classrooms when students have little information about one another's feelings, beliefs, likes and dislikes, and other seemingly minor but interesting details such as where they live, how many are in their family, whether they have hobbies or pets, and what games and sports they like. You can actively promote the attractiveness of each student to the others by providing opportunities for them to get to know and be with one another. Some ideas for promoting diverse friendship patterns out of which cohesiveness can result are given in the accompanying box, *Promoting Group Cohesiveness*, and in Table 8.3.

Groups heighten the drive of all students for affiliation, achievement, and influence. These needs are best met in a class characterized by diverse friendships between students. Learning requires trust, since learning itself requires the open and free communication of ideas between and among individuals. To ignore the critical importance of cohesiveness is to ignore one of the most powerful ingredients of learning.

### Problem Solving

Teachers must be prepared to deal with three types of **group conflict** in order to establish a productive group life in their classrooms. One type of conflict, which occurs during the storming stage of group development, arises out of the problems that learners bring with them to the classroom. Such problems are typically categorized by verbal and physical aggression, hostility, and defiance of authority.

A second type of conflict occurs when certain learners choose not to accept classroom rules or to abide by classroom norms, and subsequently withdraw from the group. They frequently engage in mildly disruptive attention-seeking behavior and low work productivity. These are often called conduct problems, and they typically result in conflicts between the teacher and a small group of learners or one particular learner. We

will discuss concepts and strategies for dealing with the first two types of conflict in the following chapter.

A third and final type of conflict arises out of the natural processes of group development. These conflicts often take the form of amiable **limit testing** during the storming stage of group development. As we saw, during this time learners often engage in distancing and centering activities. Consequently, a process for problem solving or conflict resolution is necessary during this developmental process. Therefore, problem solving, in conjunction with effective leadership, high expectations, productive norms, and group cohesiveness, is the fifth characteristic by which we gauge the health of group classroom life.

### Some Examples of Group Conflict

What should you do when these incidents occur?

During a discussion of the merits of the Vietnam War in a high school history class, one student comments that the war was immoral. Another learner says, “My father was in that war and was seriously wounded. I don’t think he did anything immoral!” The two students begin to shout at one another. Other class members take sides. No one is listening to anyone else or to you anymore.

In a first-grade class, learners are selecting books during independent reading time. Two learners want the same book. They start yelling and pushing each other. The whole class is looking at them and you.

A seventh-grade teacher decides to reconstitute her small work groups. She gives the learners their assignments. One student comes up to her and says, “I don’t want to be in the same group as Michael. He always thinks he’s right and wants to do everything his way.”

A fifth-grade teacher assigns Tiffany to take the attendance slip to the office for this week. Several students complain that the teacher is playing favorites. “Why do you always give the good jobs to Tiffany?” they protest.

An eighth-grade science teacher announces that the class is going to participate in the science fair. She gives them a list of potential projects. Several students object. “This isn’t required. Why do we have to do this? My friends in Mr. Mims’s class don’t have to do science projects.”

Social psychologists tell us that conflicts like these are inevitable aspects of group life. They occur whenever you bring together a group of individuals with diverse backgrounds, needs, and interests. These conflicts also serve an important purpose: they provide learners with an opportunity to learn how to problem solve and how to work out mutually acceptable relationships. If you suppress conflicts or fail to view them as inevitable and necessary features of group life, you may lose an opportunity to guide your class toward the performing stage of development.

### Conflicts Arising Out of Group Dynamics

At the start of this chapter we defined the characteristics of a group as including common goals, relationships, and group structure. Consequently, conflicts that arise out of group dynamics usually surround goals, interpersonal relationships, and classroom procedures.

**Goal Conflicts.** **Goal conflicts** occur when teachers and learners, or learners among themselves, disagree about what they hope to accomplish in the classroom. A learner who comes to school primarily to be with his friends will have a goal conflict with a teacher who is concerned exclusively with academic progress. Likewise, a teacher whose primary focus is having her learners do well on a standardized basic skills test will likely have goal conflicts with learners who need to express themselves with hands-on activities

and projects. Finally, learners may disagree among themselves regarding which classroom or small group goals to work toward.

**Interpersonal Conflicts.** As we saw earlier, being in a group heightens individual needs for affiliation, power, and achievement. As a result, face-to-face interactions in a classroom can become emotionally charged. In such an atmosphere, **interpersonal conflicts** over getting one's way, who goes first, who likes whom, or divergent opinions and ideas are inevitable.

**Procedural Conflicts.** As we will see in the next chapter, much of classroom life is structured by rules and routines. Sometimes these structures are dictated by the teacher; sometimes they are negotiated between learners and teacher. Regardless of how they are derived, the end result of all rules is that not everyone can do as she pleases. Thus, **procedural conflicts** over how to line up, when to use the rest room, what learners must do before leaving their seats or sharpening their pencils, the duration of recess, and so forth are common features of classroom life.

Since goal, interpersonal, and procedural conflicts can and do arise at any stage of group development, healthy groups have a process for handling such disagreements. Glasser (1986) and Putnam and Burke (1992) urge teachers to have class discussions that center on group conflict resolution. They recommend that teachers instruct their learners how to problem solve using the following guide (see Figure 8.6):

1. Agree that there is a problem. The teacher gets all members of the class to agree that there is a problem and that they will work together to solve it.
2. State the conflict. The teacher states concisely what the conflict is and assures all learners that they will have the opportunity to state their perspectives.
3. Identify and select responses. Teacher and learners brainstorm and record solutions to the problem. They assess the short-term and long-term

consequences of the solutions and discard those that have negative consequences.

4. Create a solution. The class discusses and records a solution that all basically agree will resolve the conflict.
5. Design and implement a plan. The class discusses and works out the details of when, where, and how the conflict is to be resolved.
6. Assess the success of the plan. The class identifies information that can be gathered to determine the success of the plan. Checkpoints are identified to help the class evaluate its progress. When the conflict is resolved, the value of the problem-solving process is discussed with the entire class.

#### Summary: The Larger Context of Classroom Management

The expert teacher must acquire three types of classroom management skills: (1) group management skills, (2) conduct management skills, and (3) instructional management skills. In this chapter we have discussed group management skills: the challenges and opportunities that you will face by virtue of being responsible for a group of individuals. Guiding group development requires an understanding of the stages of group development, the problems arising at each stage, and the effective use of group management skills to promote leadership, high expectations, norms, group cohesiveness, and problem solving. These relationships are summarized in Figure 8.7.

As a teacher you will need more than group management skills to manage your classroom. You also must be prepared to provide learners with a safe and orderly learning environment at the outset of group life. This will require that you acquire the skills of conduct management. Throughout the group development process, conduct problems with individual learners or small groups of learners will arise, and you must be prepared to deal with them quickly and effectively. These conduct management skills will be the focus of our next chapter.



## Summing Up

This chapter introduced you to group process in the classroom. Its main points were these:

- Three properties make a classroom a cohesive group of learners: (1) relationships, (2) common goals, and (3) a social structure.
- Social structure refers to the roles and functions that members of the group assume, and how those who assume various roles and functions relate to one another.
- Research indicates that the presence of others during the learning of complex intellectual tasks produces faster learning with greater retention. The superiority of group learning is attributed to the benefits of having to explain to others complex concepts in one's own words.
- Although emotional conflicts within a group may be inevitable, they derive from at least two sources: (1) patterns of feelings and interaction learned at home and (2) disagreements that arise when learners discover how others feel about them and try to meet their own goals.
- There are four stages of group development: forming, when concerns about acceptance and responsibilities are resolved; storming, when concerns about shared influence are resolved; norming, when concerns about how work gets done are resolved; and performing, when concerns about freedom, control, and self-regulation are resolved.
- Two types of "limit testing" during the storming stage of group development are (1) challenges to the teacher's authority and leadership, called distancing, and (2) questioning how one will personally benefit from the group, called centering.
- Norms are expectations shared by group members regarding how they should think, feel, and behave. Norms orient group members to appropriate social interactions, create group identification and cohesiveness, and promote academic achievement and positive relationships.

- Five types of social power or leadership are expert, referent, legitimate, reward, and coercive power. All teachers should work toward expert and referent power.
- The “self-fulfilling prophecy,” or “Pygmalion effect,” describes how expectancies tend to confirm themselves.
- Research suggests that cohesive groups produce higher levels of academic achievement in conceptual learning, problem solving, and metacognitive learning than individual, competitive learning formats.
- Recommended steps for resolving procedural conflicts in the classroom are these: (1) agree on the problem and that the class will work together to resolve it, (2) give all individuals a chance to state the nature of the conflict, (3) identify and select responses, (4) discuss and record a solution, (5) design a plan to implement the solution, and (6) evaluate the success of the plan.

#### For Discussion and Practice

- \*1. In your own words, explain the difference between a developmental psychologist and a social psychologist with regard to how perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and actions are formed. Cite a theorist from this chapter and one from Chapters 2 and 3 to help you make your distinction.
2. Describe two different groups of which you are a member, one low in cohesiveness and the other high in cohesiveness, in terms of relationships, common goals, and social structure.
3. Using Figure 8.2 as your guide, identify four activities you could assign to your class that would represent a task-group goal, a task-individual goal, a social-emotional-group goal, and a social-emotional-individual goal.
- \*4. Cite recent research evidence that higher achievement results when learning occurs in groups. How might you apply these findings to your classroom?

5. Using a group of which you are a member, give an example of how an individual might strive for (1) affiliation with the group, (2) power within the group, and (3) achievement as a result of the group. Identify how each of these strivings might be represented by a learner in your classroom.
- \*6. Give two competing explanations for how a learner develops a self-concept. Which do you believe is the stronger explanation?
- \*7. Identify and give an example of a principal concern at each of the four stages of group development.
- \*8. Give an example of a question a student might raise in your classroom exhibiting (a) distancing behavior and (b) centering behavior. What would be your response to each question?
- \*9. Provide examples of a norm that might exist in the following situations: at the dinner table, in a college classroom, on a date, during a test, in your classroom. What did these example norms have in common?
- \*10. In your own words, how does someone obtain (a) expert, (b) referent, (c) legitimate, (d) reward, and (e) coercive power? Toward which of these should a new teacher begin to work?
- \*11. Describe the sequence of events that would lead a teacher's expectations to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. What would be a way to break that cycle?
- \*12. What was the result of Gage and Berliner's research study that examined how teachers interacted with their students? Which of their categories of bias do you feel you are most prone to?
- \*13. Indicate the three functions norms can serve and suggest an activity you could implement in your classroom that would serve each function.
14. On the first day of class you reprimand a student for ridiculing another student who is having trouble pronouncing a word. Indicate how your

behavior might become diffused and crystallized by the actions of your students to create a classroom norm.

- \*15. What are some of the ways you could influence the development of a norm in your classroom or alter an existing one? Which of these do you believe would be the most effective in creating a new norm, and which would be most effective in altering an existing norm?
- \*16. Cite the research that you believe would convince a friend that group cohesiveness affects academic achievement and productivity.
- \*17. Identify some ways to promote group cohesiveness in a classroom. Which do you believe would be most appropriate for your subject and grade level? (Suggest at least one other approach suitable for your classroom.)
- \*18. Identify the source of three different types of conflicts you are likely to encounter in your classroom. Provide one suggestion for how you might resolve each of them.
- 19. Provide an example of (1) a goal conflict, (2) an interpersonal conflict, and (3) a procedural conflict likely to occur in your classroom. How would you attempt to resolve each of them?

### Suggested Readings

Borich, G. (1993). *Clearly outstanding: Making each day count in your classroom*.

Needham, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Through the eyes and ears of three teachers, this book shows how teachers can establish positive relationships with their classes and as a result improve the effectiveness of their teaching.

Cohen, E. G. (1986). *Designing groupwork: Strategies for the heterogeneous classroom*.

New York: Teachers College Press. A practical guide for teachers on how to prepare and conduct group classroom work.

- Glasser, W. (1990). *The quality school: Managing students without coercion*. New York: Harper & Row. Glasser demonstrates how his theories of student needs and student motivation can be applied to restructuring American classrooms.
- Schmuck, R. A., & Schmuck, P. A. (1992). *Group processes in the classroom* (6th ed.). Dubuque, IA: William C. Brown. Applies theories and research in social psychology to the understanding of classroom group processes. Contains numerous practical activities to promote group cohesiveness.

**Group.** Two or more persons engaged in interactions around a common goal so that each member of the group influences the others.

### Figure 8.1

Properties of a group.

Social psychologists tell us that groups of learners live according to certain rules of behavior, have expectations for their members, and require distinct role relationships.

**Group cohesiveness.** The degree to which members of a group have relationships, common goals, and a social structure within that group.

What goals can I work toward to make my classroom into a more cohesive group of learners?

**Social structure.** Roles and functions that members of a group assume.

### Figure 8.2

Goals and goal-related activities. From *Group Processes in the Classroom*, 5th ed., by R. A. Schmuck and P. A. Schmuck. Copyright © 1988 Times Mirror Higher Education Group, Inc., Dubuque, Iowa. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission.

Focus on

Richard Schmuck, University of Oregon, and  
Patricia Schmuck, Lewis and Clark College

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, we collaborated at the Research Center for Group Dynamics of the University of Michigan with our good friend and mentor, Ron Lippitt, who was a student of Kurt Lewin. In those days, Pat was an elementary school teacher while Dick was completing his doctoral dissertation on peer relationships and academic achievement in the classroom. Classroom group processes were just beginning to be explored by scholars, and we were intrigued, as both practitioners and researchers, with the social-emotional world of the classroom. We also were committed to making classrooms more democratic cultures. In 1969 we were asked to prepare a text, *Group Processes in the Classroom*, which was published in 1971. That first edition helped educational and school psychologists begin to recognize the importance of group dynamics to effective instruction.

In that first edition, we wanted to present theory and research on group dynamics and to give practical advice to teachers. We sought to make our theories practical and to use innovative practice to help shape our theories. We held a balance between theory and practice in the subsequent six editions. When we became parents and citizens involved in the public schools, we saw how important it was for teachers and administrators to understand the social-emotional life of the classroom and how it affected academic learning. Throughout its subsequent editions, our book chronicled our professional and personal lives in schools. Each successive edition updated the ongoing research and told

new stories about our growing children, Julie (born in 1965) and Allen (born in 1968). It also told of our personal experiences such as helping to form an alternative public school, traveling to other countries, and adding new practical advice to teachers which we had gleaned from our students, research, and consulting.

The social world of the classroom is complex; it is a rich system of human interaction linking students, teachers, and the curriculum. How students communicate with one another, how the teacher organizes learning activities, how peer-group norms influence behavior, how power is shared, and how leadership is exercised all affect student learning and group climate. In our work we have tried to help teachers learn about the social complexities of classroom life; skillful teachers take account of the myriad of formal and informal relationships that affect student learning. To help them accomplish this we have worked on how and when to use cooperative learning procedures.

Today, group-process skills are the foundations of effective cooperative learning, an important teaching strategy of the 1990s. We have been active participants in the cooperative learning movement. Dick served as the first president of the International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education from 1979 to 1982, and Pat helped convene the 1994 convention of that association in Portland, Oregon.

Since the publication of our first edition of *Group Processes in the Classroom*, we have developed related areas of scholarship to enrich teachers' understanding of classroom life. Dick has worked on organizational development in education. Pat has worked intensively on gender equity in education, focusing on women in school administration. Our latest collaborative research was a study of rural schools, *Small Districts, Big Problems*, in which we combined our loves of schools and traveling with a six-month, 10,000-mile tour of 25 small districts on the "blue highways" of America. To-  
gether, we remain committed to studying and improving classrooms, since it is within the social interaction of the classroom that learning occurs.

**Social needs.** Needs for affiliation, power, and achievement that are either not present or not as strong outside a group context.

**Self-concept.** A schema that an individual holds toward him- or herself.

Students who work in groups experience needs for belonging, power, and achievement. When these needs are satisfied, high levels of achievement and motivation result.

**Stage of group formation.** In social psychology, a period of group development in which the concerns of the group and functioning of the group are different from the periods preceding and following.

What are some of the ways I can put my learners at ease during the first few days of class?

### **Figure 8.3**

Stages of group development.

When learners first come together in a group, each person may feel concerns about acceptance, influence, and competence. Skilled teachers recognize and address these concerns of their students.

How should I respond to learners who choose to challenge my authority early in the school year?



**Distancing.** Behaviors that challenge authority and leadership to test the limits of group commitments.

### Applying Your Knowledge:

#### Fostering Group Development

The following actions will help you foster group cohesiveness during each stage of group development.

##### Forming

- Help teachers and students learn about one another and develop trust.
- Foster learners' appreciation for each others' abilities.
- Inform learners about work expectations, rules, routines, and what life in the classroom will be like.
- Promote learners' view of themselves as having a voice in the running of the classroom.
- Assess what learners know and can do.

##### Storming

- Don't feel threatened by or overreact to distancing or centering behavior—it will pass.
- Recognize the storming stage as a necessary part of group development.
- Monitor learners' compliance with rules, but be willing to reconsider those that aren't working.
- Avoid showing favoritism to any members of the group.

##### Norming

- Reinforce established classroom routines positively (see Chapter 9).
- Except for necessary reinforcement of rules, devote the greatest amount of attention to instruction.

## Performing

- Reinforce learners' abilities to set their own priorities, budget their own time, and discipline themselves.
- Model reflective behavior and self-reinforcement skills.
- Structure year-end activities to prepare learners for the transition to the next school year.

**Centering.** The questioning by a member of a group about how that individual will personally benefit from the group; a preoccupation with fairness.

Table 8.1

### Important Questions About Group Development

Stage I: Forming	Stage II: Storming	Stage III: Norming	Stage IV: Performing
1. Are there activities that its enable everyone to get to know about one another?	1. Are conflicts openly recog- nized and discussed?	1. Is there a process for resolving conflict?	1. Can this group evaluate own effectiveness?
2. Has everyone had a chance to be heard?	2. Can the group assess its own functioning?	2. Can the group set goals?	2. Can the group and indi- viduals solve their own problems?
3. Do learners interact with a variety of classmates? work	3. Are new and different ideas listened to and evaluated?	3. Can learners express what is expected of them?	3. Do the group members have opportunities to independently and

express

themselves through a

med-

ium of their own

choosing?

- |                             |                                  |                            |                             |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 4. Do learners and teachers | 4. Are the skills of all members | 4. Is there mutual respect | 4. Can individuals evaluate |
| listen to one another?      | being used?                      | between teacher and        | themselves and set goals    |
|                             |                                  | learners?                  | for personal                |

improvement?

- |                               |                              |                      |                             |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 5. Have concerns and/or fears | 5. Do all learners have an   | 5. What happens to   | 5. Is the group prepared to |
| regarding academic and be-    | opportunity to share leader- | learners who fail to | disband?                    |
| havioral expectations         | ship and responsibility?     | respect norms?       |                             |
| been addressed?               |                              |                      |                             |

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**Norms.** Shared expectations among group members regarding how they should think, feel, and behave; the principal regulators of group behavior.

What types of social power can I acquire at the beginning of the year to help me form and lead a cohesive classroom?

## Figure 8.4

Five types of social power.

**Expert power.** The legitimation of an individual's leadership because others perceive that individual as an expert.

**Referent power.** Leadership earned because of a perception of an individual's trustworthiness, fairness, and concern for members of the group.

Teachers establish leadership in a variety of ways: by appearing competent, friendly, and trustworthy and by the skillful use of rewards and logical consequences.

**Legitimate power.** Leadership based on a specific role rather than on the nature of an individual.

**Reward power.** Leadership based on rewards or benefits that an individual can give to members of a group.

**Coercive power.** Leadership based on punishment or coercion.

How can I avoid creating self-fulfilling prophecies in which my expectations about individual learners later influence my behavior toward them?

**Self-fulfilling prophecy.** The correlation that has been observed between expectations and performance.

**Expectancy (Pygmalion) effect.** Often referred to as a “self-fulfilling prophecy,” the correlation between high teacher expectations and high learner achievement and low teacher expectations and low learner achievement.

### **Figure 8.5**

Self-fulfilling prophecy.

Applying Your Knowledge:

#### Avoiding Expectancy Effects

Following these guidelines will help you avoid expectancy effects in your classroom:

- Avoid calling on high-achieving students more often than low-achieving students to answer questions, read before the group, recite, or solve problems at the blackboard.
- Do not use low-achieving learners more often as message carriers, seatwork collectors, or material distributors.
- Give both high- and low-achieving students equal amounts of time to answer questions and equal numbers of prompts, hints, and leading questions.
- Give equal amounts of feedback and corrective comments to all students.
- Avoid demanding a higher level of completed and correct work from high-achieving students.
- Avoid seating high-achieving students nearer the front of the room.
- Avoid interrupting low-achieving students more frequently when they are reading, reciting, or answering questions.
- Avoid praising low-achieving students for marginal or below-average performance.
- Ask high cognitive level questions of both high and low achievers.
- Contact the parents of low-achieving learners for academic concerns, not just for behavioral concerns.

- Use similar disciplinary techniques with all learners.

**Norm diffusion.** The formation of expectations among a group of learners as a result of past individual experiences and expectations.

**Norm crystallization.** The convergence of expectations into a shared perspective by the group.

Table 8.2

### Do As I Say, Not As I Do

The following actions can work against the development of positive classroom norms.

1. My teacher interrupts me without a word of apology, but if I interrupt my teacher, he says I am rude.
2. My teacher is a grouch and mean but expects me to be pleasant and nice.
3. My teacher expects me to like school but has dull, boring, slow-moving lessons.
4. My teacher tells me my work is poor but doesn't show me how to improve.
5. I can't read my teacher's handwriting, but he expects mine to be legible.
6. My teacher says he will allow me to do something special, but he never does.
7. My teacher says he will grade my homework, but I saw it in his wastebasket.
8. My teacher tells me to listen but never listens to me.
9. My teacher eats in the classroom, but I am not allowed to.
10. My teacher says I can't talk in the cafeteria, but he does.

## Applying Your Knowledge:

### Influencing Group Norms

The following techniques will help you develop positive group norms in your classroom.

- Explain to the class the concept of a group norm. Draw up a list of norms with the class. Over time, add and delete norms that either help or impede the work of the group.
- Conduct discussions of class norms and encourage learners to talk about them among themselves. Glasser (1986) suggests discussing with students ideas on how the class might be run, problems that may interfere with the group's performance, and needed rules and routines.
- Appoint or elect a class council to make recommendations for improving the group's climate and productivity. Have the group assess whether the norms are or are not working.
- Provide a model of the respect, consistency, and responsibility for learning that you want your learners to exhibit.

How can I develop positive norms of conduct and learning in my classroom?

**Cooperative learning.** The assignment of students of varying abilities and ethnicities and of both genders to small groups with a common goal in which each member has a role.

Cohesiveness produces not only individual achievement but also group productivity in the classroom.

Table 8.3

### Group Acquaintance Activities

Activity	Description
Name chain	Have students sit in a circle and, in order, say their first names and tell one thing about themselves. Each succeeding student must repeat the name of each student who preceded and one thing each person said. If Sam speaks first, followed by Maria, Maria begins her turn by saying, "That's Sam and he has a pet turtle. I'm Maria and my sister is a singer." Then, Didi, who speaks next, must identify both Sam and Maria, and so on.
What's in a name	Have students sit in small groups of five or six and tell one another something about their name: What it is, how they got it, their nickname, if people misspell or mispronounce their name, if they like their name, and what they want the class to call them.
Interviews	Start off as a whole group activity. Ask the class to list questions that would help them know a classmate better. Then students pair off, interview one another, and form new pairs.
Guess who	Have each student write a brief autobiographical sketch, which you then collect and read back to the class. Students have to guess the name of the individual whose sketch is being read. Some misleading information can be given, and students have to identify the person and then separate fact from fiction about the person.

What are some practical strategies and activities I can use in my classroom to promote trust and group cohesiveness?

Applying Your Knowledge:

#### Promoting Group Cohesiveness

Following are some specific techniques you can use to promote group cohesiveness in your classroom.



- Construct a bulletin board around the theme of friendships by having students bring pictures of friends. Have them take turns telling how they met the friend.
- Have your students write brief biographies. Gather all the autobiographies into a book entitled “Our Lives,” and give each student a copy to read and discuss.
- Have students form a friendship circle in which they pass around something they have made (a toy, tool, model, etc.), for other students to examine and admire.
- Place the names (turned over) of your students in a box. Have each select the name of a classmate, who then becomes his or her “pal.” Pals then give to or do nice things for one another. At regular intervals, each student selects one more name to add to his or her list of pals.
- Publish a student directory that includes names, hobbies, jobs, career aspirations, and so on.
- Form work groups that mix students of different backgrounds so that the same individuals are not always together.

**Group conflict.** Disruptions that destabilize group relationships, structures, and goals.

**Limit testing.** Challenges to teacher authority and leadership; the questioning by an individual of how he or she will personally benefit from a group. Often occurs during the storming stage of group development.

**Goal conflicts.** Conflicts that arise as a result of learner-teacher or learner-learner disagreement about what should be accomplished in the classroom.

**Interpersonal conflicts.** Conflicts between members of a class group over individual needs for affiliation, power, and achievement.

**Procedural conflicts.** Disagreements between members of a group over classroom rules and routines.

In what ways can I resolve naturally occurring conflicts arising out of the group dynamics of my classroom?

**Figure 8.6**

Steps in the problem-solving process.

**Figure 8.7**

**Summary of stages of group development and characteristics of a productive group climate.**

Questions marked with an asterisk are answered in the appendix.